

**Fermilab**  
**FY2002 Self-assessment**  
**Process Assessment Report**  
**For**  
**Division/Section:** Particle Physics Division

**Date** September 27, 2002

Division/Section performing assessment

Particle Physics Division (PPD)

Name of organization that owns assessed process

PPD - Support Services Department

Organization Strategy

*How does the assessed process contribute to the accomplishment of the owning organization's mission?*

Scientists, in support of the Laboratory's scientific mission, travel domestically and internationally to conduct meetings and do work in support of High Energy Physics. The assessed process concerns itself with the accuracy and completeness of information submitted on the Travel Request Form and the timeliness with which the requests are handled in the Division Office for review and approval. Another element of this process reports on the financial impact of domestic travel on the organization's budget and the manpower required to manage the process from the initial approval stage through the preparation of reimbursement vouchers.

Names of Personnel on Assessment team

Elaine Phillips, Dept. Head for Support Services  
Leticia Shaddix, Administrative Support Assistant II  
John Cooper, PPD Division Head

Personnel on the assessment team were travel reviewers and approvers.

Name of process assessed

Domestic Travel Process

### Brief description of process to be assessed

Travel requests are processed through the Fermilab travel system on a Fermilab form called the "Travel Authorization and Expense Voucher."

The travel authorization requests are signed by the traveler and approved by his or her supervisor. In some cases, third party approval may be required if the trip costs are being paid by another department. Certain fields on the form are required for completion before submittal to the Division Office as well as attachments if the request is for attendance at a conference or workshop. These forms may include Registration Fee Payment Forms, Justification for Lodging exceeding the FTR maximum, and information related to conferences. The requests come to the PPD Division Office for review by the Division Conference Regulator and are then submitted for approval to the Division Head. Once they are fully approved, the trip requests are logged into the Particle Physics Division Domestic Travel database.

On an annual basis, a survey is completed by the Division Office to summarize the number of trips taken, the dollar cost per trip, and the number of FTE's required to manage the travel function in a given fiscal year. This information is submitted to the Laboratory Directorate for inclusion in the Congress Report.

### 1. Are metrics associated with this process? If so, what are they?

#### Indicator #1: Missing information on the Travel Request form

If a travel request is missing a required field of information or attachments are not included, then that request is noted as deficient. The number of deficient requests is to be divided by the total number of requests in the assessment sample and a percentage assigned. Since the goal is to have "no deficient" requests, i.e. that each request is submitted to the Division with accurate and complete information, then the rating would be based on the percent of those that were found to be deficient.

80 – 100%	Outstanding
60 - 79%	Excellent
40 - 59%	Good
20 - 39%	Marginal
0 – 19%	Unsatisfactory

Indicator #2: Timeliness of the review and approval process

The metrics are as follows:

Description	Timeliness through the checkpoints
Outstanding	Between 2 – 4 hours
Excellent	4 hours to 8 hours
Good	8 hours to 24 hours
Marginal	24 – 48 hours
Unsatisfactory	Greater than 48 hours

Indicator #3: Total cost of domestic travel for the year

The Lab Directorate has imposed a total travel cost limit of \$1M per year for the Particle Physics Division. Assuming that domestic and foreign travel each represent 50% of the total cost, then we can establish the following metrics for the total cost of domestic travel per year for PPD:

Description	Total cost of domestic travel in PPD per year	
Outstanding	10% under budget	
Excellent	On budget	\$500k
Good	10% over budget	
Marginal	20% over budget	
Unsatisfactory	Greater than 20% over budget	

Indicator #4: FTE's used to complete the travel forms

In FY00, the domestic travel effort took 1.67 FTE's spread over 22 people and in FY01, it was 1.77 FTE's spread across 23 people. We have taken the average of the two (1.72 FTE's) and established ranges as follows for the metrics:

Description	# of FTE's effort	
Outstanding	1.25 to 1.39 FTE's	Less 30% of average
Excellent	1.40 to 1.54 FTE's	Less 20% of average
Good	1.55 to 1.89 FTE's	Within 10% of the average
Marginal	1.90 TO 2.08 FTE's	Average plus 20%
Unsatisfactory	2.09 to 2.27 FTE's	Average plus 30%

2. What are the names of the procedures associated with this process? (List all procedure names that describe or document this process).

The name of the procedure is the official "Fermilab Travel Authorization and Expense Voucher Form," #1335-0290, revision 01/00.

3. Are these procedures being followed? Are they current?

Yes, this procedure is being followed and is current.

4. Describe the methodology used to assess this process.

During the period of September 16 – 27, 2002, nine (9) Fermilab Travel Authorization Requests were selected at random and tracked through the PPD Division Office. Each of these nine travel requests was reviewed for errors in accuracy or completeness, or failure to attach documentation. They were also "date and time" stamped as they passed through each approval checkpoint to verify the timeliness of the approval process.

A summary report of PPD Domestic Travel for FY 02 was generated based on information in the PPD Domestic Travel database through September 27, 2002.

5. Results of the assessment:

*a. Are the existing process controls adequate?*

Process controls exist at several points. They are adequate and provide quality assurance to the process of review and approvals of domestic travel requests.

The initial control point is the Administrative Support Assistant in the Division Office who receives the form from the travelers and submits the requests to the Division Conference Regulator. The administrative support assistant checks each domestic travel request to ensure that the relevant signatures have been obtained, that the per diem Rate/Day and the Lodging FTR Maximum have been filled in, and that all necessary attachments and other forms are included.

The second control point is the Division Conference Regulator who again reviews the form for accuracy and completeness and then makes the determination as to whether or not the trip meets the definition of a "conference" as per DOE Order 110.3. The appropriate Exclusion Nr. as per DOE Order 110.3 is noted and the form is signed.

The PPD Division Head provides the final signature on the Travel Request document. He also acts as a control point when a signature authority, budget code or the feasibility of a trip is questioned. He is the ultimate and last point of review and control.

*b. Have any notable practices been identified?*

The Division requires that the per diem Rate/Day and the Lodging FTR Maximum be noted on the initial Travel request so that travelers are made aware of the lodging maximum for the localities where they will spend the night. This is to provide travelers with advance information so they can select lodging within the rate set by DOE and/or obtain advance approval to exceed the lodging rate based on certain criteria. This has made travelers more cognizant of the Lab's policies and procedures and reduced the time spent on approvals for lodging exceptions.

"Rush" travels are hand-carried through the process in the Division Office, rather than being left in an "in-box" for the approvers.

*c. Have any major deficiencies been identified?*

No major deficiencies were identified.

During the assessment, the "date and time stamping" activity was initiated at the first checkpoint when the Administrative Support Assistant completed her review of the form submitted by the traveler. There was no way to determine when the travel request had arrived on her desk; however, she routinely processes requests as quickly as she can and always on the same day of receipt. The travel approval process is one that is considered a priority in her list of duties. The "date and times" were noted after the administrative support assistant had reviewed and completed her inspection of the paperwork, when the second checkpoint had completed review for compliance with DOE Order 110.3, and when the Division Head placed the final signature on the form.

*d. Is the process working effectively? What improvements can be made?*

The first step of the self-assessment was to verify that Domestic Travel requests are submitted with accurate and complete information needed to make the approval decision. Out of the nine (9) travel requests that were assessed, four of them required additional information such as an approval signature for a budget code, per diem and lodging notations, and additional documentation on a conference. In one instance, a phone call was made to the traveler to determine if he was attending a conference or an invited speaker. Corrections were made and attachments added to the requests as needed.

The second step of the self-assessment involved tracking a domestic travel request to verify how long it takes to get approved in the Particle Physics Division Office. The average time for a travel request to get through the process was 14 hours from the first checkpoint to the final signature. The quickest turn-around time for a travel request to be approved was 2.25 hours. In the case where the traveler had to respond to the Division Office, the entire process took 26 hours.

The third step of the self-assessment was the annual Summary report of PPD Domestic Travel for FY 02. Comparing FY 01 to FY 02, there were changes in the travel planner group but overall this total increased from 23 employees to only 25 employees. 664 trips were taken in FY02 as compared to 851 trips in FY01. Similarly, the k\$ spent on domestic travel was lower in FY 02. The Snowmass 2001 conference had a significant impact on the number of trips and the total cost in FY 01. We did not have a conference of that magnitude in FY 02.

The actual total cost for domestic travel was down by 45% this fiscal year (FY01 total of \$656.8k as compared to \$452.6k in FY02).

In FY01, the k\$ per trip was \$772 versus \$682 in FY02 or \$90 less per trip.

On a summary level, the domestic travel effort took up 1.77 FTE's in FY01. In FY02, this number was up, over 2 FTE's (2.21). A greater percentage of time was spent by the administrative support staff in the Theoretical Physics and Astrophysics Departments as domestic travel took up more of their time.

Improvements can be made in the accuracy and completeness of the information being submitted to the Division Office on the original travel forms. While changes in domestic travel policies and procedures are communicated to the administrative field staff generally through email, there has been no formalized training in FY 02 except for new hires and individuals who are new to the responsibility. Travel requests are generally submitted by the administrative support staff who have had some level of training and are knowledgeable of the policies, but there are occasions when the travelers themselves submit requests directly to the Division Office and information is inaccurate or incomplete. While this is generally the exception, it does occur. It should be stressed that the administrative support staff should at least review the traveler's request to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the information before the form is submitted to the Division Office.

The average of 14 hours to complete the review and approval cycle for a travel request in the PPD Division Office was considered good based on the time of year in which the self-assessment was conducted. During the two week self-assessment period, the Division was in the final fiscal month of the year. Meeting schedules were extremely heavy and the workload was being affected by year-end reports, Lab-wide budget reviews, performance reviews, and Lehman reviews of major experiments. This had a direct impact on the time available for the approvers to spend on travel requests. "Rush" travels were hand carried through the process and expedited. A test should be conducted on another random sample of domestic travel requests at another point during the calendar year, not during the month of September, to determine if the timeliness improves.

The database used to track and document PPD domestic travel generates the information for the required report. The administrative support assistant responsible for data entry maintains the database up-to-date. No improvements need to be made to the database or how it is being managed.

*e. How does current performance compare to last assessment, other similar labs, industry?*

This is the first assessment. It might be useful to compare results with another Division having a similar volume of domestic travel. This would depend on the procedures employed by the other Division and whether an apples-to-apples comparison could be made.

*f. What are the results for the metrics?*

Were travel requests submitted with accurate and complete information needed to make the approval decision?

# of Travel request forms reviewed during the self assessment	Was information accurate and complete?	Error rate
9	1 - Signature authority missing 3 - Per diem and lodging fields were not completed or information provided was insufficient 5 - Accurate and complete	45% failed to provide correct or sufficient information  55% were accurate and complete

How long does it take to get a domestic travel request approved in the Particle Physics Division Office?

Travel Request	Total time elapsed to complete all three checkpoints		Adjectival Grade
1	22.5 hrs.	Less than 24 hours	Good
2	2.25 hrs.	Less than 4 hours	Outstanding
3	22 hrs.	Less than 24 hours	Good
4	2.25 hrs.	Less than 4 hours	Outstanding
5	2.25 hrs.	Less than 4 hours	Outstanding
6	19 hrs.	Less than 24 hours	Good
7	8.25 hrs.	Less than 24 hours	Good
8	26 hrs.	24 to 48 hours	Marginal
9	22.25 hrs.	Less than 24 hours	Good
Results:			
9 travel requests	Average of 14 hrs.		5 – Good
			3 – Outstanding
			1 - Marginal

*g. Adjectival grade achieved:*

Indicator #1: Accuracy and completeness of information on travel request form: Good

Indicator #2: Timeliness of the approval process: Good

Indicator #3: Total cost of domestic travel for the year: Outstanding

Indicator #4: FTE's used to complete the travel forms : Unsatisfactory

Overall grade: Good

### Identified opportunities for improvement

- Conduct a training session for the administrative support assistants who submit domestic travel requests to the Division Office.
- Expand on the first meeting with a second one to review the preparation of domestic travel vouchers.
- Conduct sample tests to verify the timeliness of the review and approval process for travel requests in the Division Office and compare results to the self-assessment of September 2002.

### Schedule for implementation of improvements

- Conduct the training session in the first quarter of FY 03.
- Conduct the second meeting on travel voucher preparation in the second quarter of FY 03.
- Conduct sample tests in the second and third fiscal year quarters of FY03 to verify the timeliness of the review and approval process for travel requests in the PPD Division Office.

### Status of improvements from previous assessment

This is the first time that this process has been assessed.

### Attachments:

#### Comparison of Domestic Travel in PPD from FY-00 through FY-02

FY	Allocated budget in k \$ (foreign and domestic)	# of domestic trips	Actual costs thru year end spent on domestic travel in k\$	As % of total allocated budget	k\$ per trip	# of FTE effort expended on domestic travel function
FY 00	\$1,050.00	457	\$261.00	25%	\$0.57	1.67
FY 01	\$1,050.00	851	\$656.80	63%	\$0.77	1.77
FY 02	\$1,012.00	664	\$452.60	45%	\$0.68	2.21



FTE's spent on Domestic Travel in PPD in FY02

Changes since Prior Year	% time spent on Domestic Travel	Travel planners/approvers
New responsibility	0.03	Brown
Domestic has increased	0.35	May
Domestic has increased	0.35	Duty
New responsibility	0.07	Erickson
Same as PY	0.02	Federwitz
Same as PY	0.03	Grozis
Same as PY	0.10	Hronek
New responsibility	0.05	Johnson
New responsibility	0.01	Kennedy
Same as PY	0.02	Michael
Domestic has decreased	0.03	Perington
Same as PY	0.10	Picciolo
New responsibility	0.02	Read
Same as PY	0.20	Schultz
Domestic has increased	0.15	Shaddix
Domestic has increased	0.01	Trevino
Domestic has increased	0.07	Vizcarra
Same as PY	0.05	S. Winchester
Domestic has increased	0.15	Curry
Same as PY	0.20	Laue
Same as PY	0.01	Passarella
Same as PY	0.01	Kristen
Domestic has increased	0.02	Cooper
Domestic decreased	0.15	Phillips
Same as PY	0.01	Arroyo
TOTALS:	2.21	25 employees
FY 02 SUMMARY:	<u>Domestic</u> 2.21  \$452.60  664  69  0.682  300.45	FTE's Spread over 25 people  K\$ of travel costed in FY 02  Number of trips taken in FY 02  Trips approved to date in FY03 (Q1 only)  K\$ per trip  NR. of trips handled per FTE

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